



Outputs to outcomes: A preliminary assessment of community impact through community voice

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Summary

Over the last two decades, research on service-learning has increased, but scholars agree that not enough studies have focused on the impact of service-learning on “the community” (Bailis & Ganger, 2006; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Porter, et. al., 2008; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Schmidt & Robby, 2002; Stoecker & Schmidt, 2008). Additionally, research has focused more often on measuring outputs than outcomes. Outputs may include the amount of time committed by students, the monetary value of service, and the

learning students impact their partner organizations and the populations they serve (e.g., through a service-learning partnership focused on advocacy skills development, middle school students are empowered to present their community's needs before a legislative committee).

To measure outcomes, program staff from the Shriver Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) employed a survey instrument adapted from the Learn and Serve America Community Partner Survey of the American Association of Community Colleges. Staff members invited 46 community partners to complete the UMBC Service-Learning Impact Survey. In this pilot inquiry, the program received 33 responses (for a response rate of 72%). The community outcomes of students' direct interaction with community members can be organized into three primary categories: educational achievement of partner organization students, health-related outcomes of partner organization patients, and socialization of vulnerable or marginalized populations (e.g. animals). The significance of this inquiry and its argument for topics associated with service-learning and community engagement include its contribution to the field to demonstrate the value of service-learning programs to the community. This new knowledge can be used as leverage for service-learning programs and community partners for funding and ultimately for justification of continued federal support for service-learning.

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